

I AM ACCEPTED

“ We have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.” Romans 5:16 (NLT)

In the last chapter, you learned you are not your flesh. It is in you, but it is not who you are. Your soul receives input from two sources – the world and God. If you have listened to the input from the world and walked after the flesh, does God still accept you?

Some people wonder how they can be good enough for God. They feel guilty and unacceptable. Others think it is hard to obey God’s authority, so they rebel. These negative emotions and attitudes may come from a wrong view of God and how to gain His acceptance.

A wrong view of God often comes from experiences you’ve had with an earthly authority.

- Q1.** How does the world say you gain the acceptance of those in authority?

World’s Way

Your whole life you have had authorities like parents, teachers, and bosses. Authorities are in charge and have the right to tell you to do certain things. In the following diagram, the arrow indicates how their relationship with you starts from a position of **authority**.



Authority

Q2. What authorities have you had in your life?

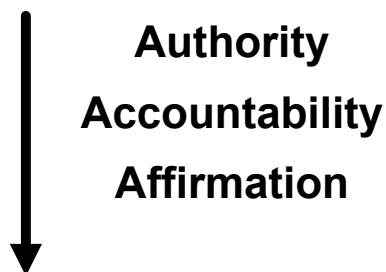
Authorities tell the people under them what to do and hold those people **accountable** for doing or not doing what they are told.



Authority
Accountability

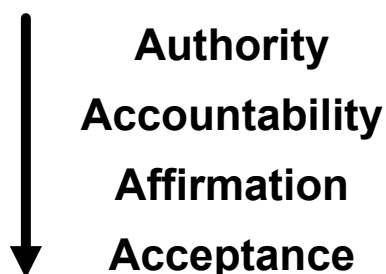
Q3. How have the authorities you listed in Q1 held you accountable for your actions?

If you do what you are told, your authorities might praise you or give you a pat on the back and if you don't, you might get belittled, receive a failing grade or lose your job. Authorities usually affirm hard workers and withhold **affirmation** from those who do not perform well.



- Q4.** Were you ever praised for doing things right or belittled for having done things wrong? How did you feel?

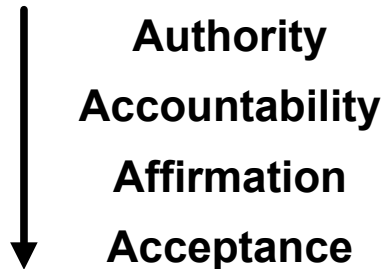
If you do things right and keep doing things right, you may finally receive that authority's **acceptance**.



- Q5.** Were there authorities in your life that made you think you couldn't do enough to receive their acceptance? Explain.

When people in authority withhold acceptance to get you to do what they want, it is a way of exercising **control**. Instead of feeling accepted, you usually end up feeling rejected.

CONTROL



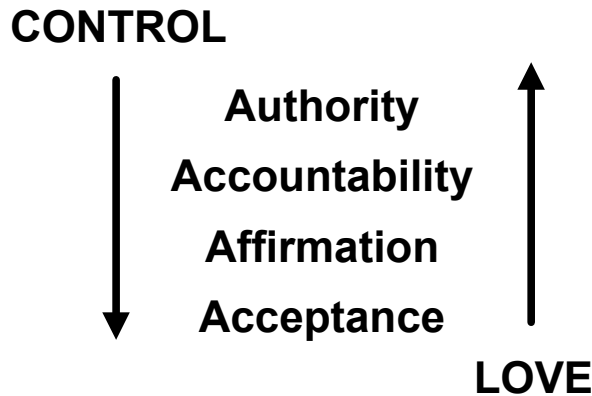
- Q6.** Have you ever felt rejected by an authority? How did you react (for example: did you rebel or try harder to please)?
- Q7.** Do you believe God accepts or rejects you based on your obedience to His authority? Why?
- Q8.** What do you think you need to change before God will accept you?

God's Way

God's way of exercising His authority is totally different than the world.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.” Isaiah 55:8 (NASB)

The world is motivated by its desire to control you. God is motivated by His **love** for you. Love makes the diagram go in the opposite direction.



Acceptance

God's way starts with **acceptance**. He accepts you right now before you *do* anything. He doesn't accept you based on your ability to obey His commands. You are accepted because Christ's death on the cross made you acceptable.

*" We have the free gift of being **accepted by God**, even though we are guilty of many sins. The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ."* **Romans 5:16–17** (NLT)

You have been made right with God. You have nothing to prove. It's done because He did it.

"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." **2 Corinthians 5:21** (NLT)

- Q9.** When you sin, how do you think God reacts toward you? Do you think God gets angry and rejects you?

You have been accepted by God because of Christ! If you believe that, then you understand your behavior does not affect His acceptance of you.

If God allowed your behavior to determine your acceptability, you would *never* be accepted. You *can't* be good enough. Your acceptance is determined by your spiritual birth.

Is it okay to continually sin? No, of course not. The Lord wants you to have victory over sin because He loves you.

Affirmation

Since God accepts you, He **affirms** His acceptance by telling you how much He loves you.

“And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.”

Ephesians 3:18–19 (NLT)

Q10. What do these verses say about how much God loves you?

When God speaks to you, His words affirm that you really are His child and He loves you. Quiet your own thoughts and ask Him to share His thoughts with you.

“For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children.” **Romans 8:16** (NLT)

Accountability

Because God loves and accepts you as His child, He shows you things you need to start doing and things you need to stop doing.

Q11. How do you feel about God telling you what to do?

“You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God’s likeness – righteous, holy, and true.” **Ephesians 4:24** (NLT)

Accountability involves God training, disciplining, and holding you responsible for your behavior. He wants the best for you. When you make bad choices, it hurts you.

*“For the Lord **disciplines** those he **loves**, and he punishes those he **accepts** as his children.’ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined?” **Hebrews 12:6–7** (NLT)*

Q12. How do you think God wants you to view His discipline?

*“Happy are those whom you discipline, LORD, and those whom you teach from your law.” **Psalm 94:12** (NLT)*

Nothing you do causes God to change His mind about you. You are always accepted in His eyes. Your identity in Christ does not change. He will never reject you. He loves you no matter what.

God’s desire is for you to obey Him because you love Him. That is how to respond to His love.

“We love Him because He first loved us.”
1 John 4:19 (NKJ)

Authority

God holds you accountable based on His position as the ultimate **authority**. He created everything, including you, for His purposes. Therefore, He has the right to tell you what you can and can’t do.

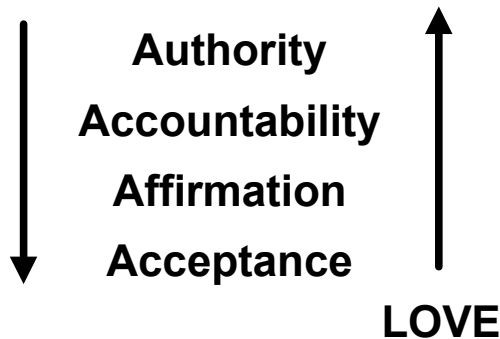
Following God’s authority becomes easier when you realize His plan is for your benefit. He is good and He loves you! When you yield to God’s authority, He doesn’t treat you like a slave; He treats you like His much loved child.

*“So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God’s very own children, **adopted** into his family – calling him ‘Father, dear Father.’” **Romans 8:15** (NLT)*

Q13. Have you believed that God’s authority is like man’s authority?
How?

World’s Way vs. God’s Way

CONTROL



Faith

When you believe you are accepted because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, you are walking by faith. But when you believe your acceptance is based on your behavior, you are walking by sight.

“That is why we live by believing and not by seeing.”
2 Corinthians 5:7 (NLT)

Consider this definition of faith: Faith is a decision to believe what God says even though it may not “feel” true.

The truest things about you are what God says about you, not what the world says about you or even what you might think about yourself.

“What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love?”
Romans 8:31–35 (NLT)

When you take action based on what God says is already true, you will begin to experience how good His authority really is!

Take Action

If you have believed God only accepts you when you are “doing good things,” **confess** that wrong thinking to God.

If your view of God’s authority has been wrong, discuss that with God. **Ask Him** to give you a proper perspective.

Thank God for accepting you.

Thank God that He is good and His plan is for your benefit.

World's Way vs. God's Way

Diagram

Notes